



OFFICE OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

PO BOX 202501
HELENA MT 59620-2501
www.opi.mt.gov
(406) 444-3095
(888) 231-9393
(406) 444-0169 (TTY)

Linda McCulloch
Superintendent

DATE: March 7, 2006
TO: SNP Supervisors/Director
FROM: Judy Wilson
Food Distribution Coordinator
RE: Retrieval of Frozen Commodities

The Department of Public Health and Human Services will retrieve frozen commodities that were delivered to your school in January-February 2006.

These items have been on hold while an investigation of a refrigerant leak in the Commodity Program Warehouse was taking place. Because of results of the investigation, the foods will be returned to the warehouse facility.

To retrieve these items in the most efficient way, the enclosed form must be filled out and returned to School Nutrition Programs as soon as possible. Watkins and Shepard Trucking Co. will contact you about picking up these foods from your school.

Please note that **only the items on the list** are to be retrieved. All other commodities that were received on the January-February shipment can be used.

We apologize for the inconvenience and disruption this has caused your food service program. If you have questions, please contact Food Distribution at (406) 444-4415.

C: School Superintendent

Attachment



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**Linda McCulloch
Superintendent**

Retrieval of Frozen Commodity Foods Received January-February 2006

Fill in the number of cases of frozen commodity foods that will be picked up by the State Commodity Program. Also document any cases that have been previously discarded and/or consumed. Sign the form and return to OPI immediately.

Product Name	Quantity (Cs) to be Retrieved by State	Quantity (Cs) Discarded On-Site	Quantity (Cs) Consumed On-Site
Cherries			
Breaded Chicken			
Oven Roasted Chicken Pieces			
6/5 Eggs			
Carrots			
Shredded Mozzarella			
Potato Wedges			
Peaches DCD FZ			
Turkey Roast			
Chix Fajita Strips			
Pork Leg Roasts FRZ			

(Signature) _____

(School/Facility) _____

Return this form to
OPI School Nutrition Programs
PO Box 202501
Helena MT 59620
or
Fax (406) 444-2955

"It is the mission of the Office of Public Instruction to improve teaching and learning through communication, collaboration, advocacy, and accountability to those we serve."

**Office of Public Instruction
Official EMAIL To Schools
March 9, 2006**

In early February the food service people at 156 school districts were notified to hold food commodities that were suspected of being contaminated by ammonia from a refrigeration leak at a Butte warehouse. The commodity samples were tested and found to be contaminated. Subsequently the Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS) has ordered the commodities to be recalled. OPI has contacted school food people in each affected district with instructions on how the recall is to proceed.

Below is the DPHHS news release on the on recall issued today. To double check whether your district is involved in the recall go to <http://www.opi.mt.gov/PDF/SchoolFood/PR030906FoodRecall.xls> If you have questions please contact Judy Wilson at 444-4415 or jwilson@mt.gov

Thank you for your cooperation.

For immediate release

March 9, 2006

Contact: Gayle Shirley, Public Information Officer, DPHHS, 406-444-2596

Joe Lamson, Communications Director, OPI, 406-444-3160

DPHHS Recalls Potentially Contaminated Food

The Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS) is recalling more than 3,000 cases of food delivered to school lunch programs across the state because the food may have been tainted with ammonia.

“We have received no reports of illness associated with the food,” said Joan Miles, DPHHS director. “But we will not take risks with the health of our children. We are recalling all of the food, and it will be destroyed.”

The department learned in late January of an ammonia leak in a Butte freezer facility that DPHHS leases to store commodity foods from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The leak occurred in a major coolant supply line. Ammonia is commonly used as a coolant in commercial freezers.

All food was immediately removed from the freezer, and the freezer was repaired the same day. Department staff inspected the food, which was frozen and appropriately packaged.

“Our primary concern was to ensure that no one’s health or safety was at risk as a result of eating any food that might have been tainted by the ammonia,” Miles said. “Based on information from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), we had no reason to believe the ammonia would

permeate the packaging, so we determined that the food was still suitable for human consumption.”

The department later shipped 3,443 cases of the frozen food to 156 school districts across the state. DPHHS is the primary provider of storage for food used in the school lunch program.

In early February, a school complained to the department that food cases it had received smelled of ammonia. The department notified schools through the state Office of Public Instruction to set the food aside and avoid serving it until further notice. The department then sent samples of the food to an FDA lab for testing.

On Feb. 27, the Department received the results of those tests, which revealed that the tested food samples had been tainted by the ammonia.

“We hope we’ve acted in time to avoid anyone becoming sick as a result of this incident,” Miles said. “We advise anyone who believes that they or their child may have been exposed to tainted food to contact their local health department to report the exposure.”

Ammonia is a colorless gas that can liquefy under pressure or dissolve in water. It is found naturally in the environment but can be toxic at high levels. It has a very sharp odor and is likely to be detected by smell or taste well before it reaches a concentration that may be harmful.

Ammonia is a corrosive substance, and the main toxic effects are burning of the skin, eyes, or other sites that have come into direct contact with it. If a person swallows ammonia in food or water, it circulates through the bloodstream in seconds, according to the U.S. Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry. Most of the ammonia rapidly changes into other harmless substances. The rest leaves the body through the urine within a couple of days.

Symptoms of ammonia toxicity include headache, nausea, vomiting, and a burning throat. Such symptoms usually occur within an hour of exposure, and there are no known long-term impacts, Miles said.

“We’re very disturbed by this incident and are exploring what we can do to ensure that this won’t happen again,” Miles said.

She noted that DPHHS is investigating other storage options and reviewing its protocols regarding handling of potentially contaminated food.

The department will begin retrieving all of the cases of food from schools beginning March 13. In the meantime, the department has reminded schools not to serve the food.